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THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™
PERSPECTIVES

A Newsletter About Survey Research for Local Government Managers and Elected Officials

How to Sign Up for The NCS™

If you have an introductory packet from ICMA, you can fill out the enrollment form and send it to National Research Center, Inc; please include a check for \$4,200 which is half of the Basic Service (\$8,400) at that time. Your check initiates The NCS™ process. You will be added to the next available Class of participants, unless you specify a different Class. NRC will send a packet of information** containing several FAQ sheets, background information on The NCS™, your timeline and a Worksheet Packet. The Worksheet Packet will guide you through the steps to customize your survey, write policy questions, and choose Add-On options where needed.

If you do not have the Introductory Packet from ICMA, you can use the enrollment form on the back of this newsletter.

You can also contact Heather Locke at NRC for additional information or an invoice at any time: heather@n-r-c.com.

**We are happy to get materials to you even faster by sending electronic (PDF) copies of all files if you prefer. Just let us know!

Enrollment Form

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Title _____ Organization _____

Mailing Address _____ City (abbreviate if necessary) _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email Address _____

To order, send this completed form with payment to:

The National Citizen Survey™ • National Research Center • Attn: Heather Locke • 3005 30th St. • Boulder, CO 80301

Pricing

PRODUCT	PRICE	DESCRIPTION
Basic	\$8,400	Includes creation of survey instrument and materials, printing and mailing to 1,200 households, data analysis and the creation of a report of results, report of normative comparisons and summary report.
Spanish	\$1,450	Includes Spanish paragraph on cover letters asking those who wish to complete the survey in Spanish to contact the jurisdiction and request Spanish copy of survey. Jurisdiction will be mailed envelopes – outbound and return – and surveys to mail out to those individuals
3,000 out	\$6,200	Mailing is of 3,000 instead of 1,200.
Custom norms	\$1,100	Through worksheet options, jurisdiction selects criteria for set of custom norms. Custom norms will be provided alongside national norms in report tables. Graphs will include either custom or national norms but not both.
One open end	\$1,350	Includes one open-ended question added to survey. Responses will be categorized and reported in a table under separate cover, accompanied by a complete list of verbatim responses.
Compare prior non-NCS results	\$1,750	Tables include comparisons to previous years' service evaluation ratings in jurisdiction – up to three previous years.
Compare prior NCS results	\$0	Comparisons included in report of results.
Demographic crosstabs	\$850	Crosstabs of questions 1-15 by 4 demographic variables on survey to be provided under separate cover from report.
Geographic crosstabs	\$1,100	Crosstabs of questions 1-15 by geographic variable to be provided under separate cover from report.
Phone data collection	\$6,000	400 completed interviews
On-site Presentation	\$2,500	Presentation of results to Council or department heads. Cost includes travel expenses.

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Meet The Best...

There is a saying in outcome management, "It's no longer how hard we try; it's how well we do." A corollary might be, "It's no longer how well we say we do; it's how well we prove we do." When the bottom line in local government quality is resident perspective, it is important to recognize those jurisdictions that have proved that residents admire the work done by their local government. That proof comes from results in The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) an affordable scientific survey conducted by National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) For the first time, NRC and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) have given the Voice of the People Awards in two categories: Excellence (the highest rated services) and Transformation (the services showing greatest improvement). The 2006 winners were identified among all the

jurisdictions that conducted The NCS in 2005 and were announced at the ICMA 2006 annual conference. To win the Award for Excellence, the rating for service quality must be one of the top three among all eligible jurisdictions and must reside in the top 10% among over 400 jurisdictions in the NRC database of citizen surveys, used to provide normative comparisons in citizen survey reports.

To win the Transformation Award, the improvement in the quality rating for a particular local government service must be significantly higher than the rating from the most recent prior survey conducted in that jurisdiction and the larger than improvement in that service shown in any other eligible jurisdiction.

Staff in the relevant departments from each winning organization identified the services, policies

and programs that were considered major factors leading to the strong ratings given by residents. You can read about these innovative practices in the winners' own words (and sometimes photos) in a password protected section of NRC's Web site. NRC clients and participants of The National Citizen Survey™ will be sent a password for access. The winning jurisdictions are named here along with the services for which they won: ↗



2006 Voice of the People Awards

- Transformation awards:**
- Boulder County, CO: *Parks services, Street repair services*
 - El Cerrito, CA: *Fire services, Recreation services*
 - Henderson, NV: *Police services*
 - Highland Park, IL: *Overall services, Garbage collection services*
- Excellence awards:**
- Ankeny, IA: *Code enforcement services*
 - Boulder County, CO: *Code Enforcement services, Parks services*
 - Cape Coral, FL: *Fire services*
 - El Cerrito, CA: *Garbage collection services*
 - Henderson, NV: *Recreation services*
 - Highland Park, IL: *Overall services, Code enforcement services, Emergency Medical Services, Fire services, Library services, Park services, Police services*
 - Hudson, OH: *Emergency Medical Services*
 - Munster, IN: *Overall services, Code enforcement services, Recreation services, Garbage collection services*
 - Palo Alto, CA: *Emergency Medical Services, Fire services, Garbage collection services, Parks services, Police services*
 - Troy, MI: *Overall services, Library services, Police services, Recreation services*

Questions & Answers

Q: We are on a successful cycle of conducting The NCS every other year. Do you have suggestions about how to augment our survey program in the off-year?

A: Many jurisdictions consider the following off-year research opportunities:

Focus groups - professionally guided discussions with 8-12 residents recruited to discuss a small number of key findings from the survey. Purpose: to understand the reasons for The NCS results, to plan action or to hear more from hard to reach populations. Results will provide greater understanding about the "why's" of The NCS findings than a service exploration survey. Results will not represent the entire community's perspective but will give the most in depth understanding of those gathered for the focus group.

In-depth service exploration survey - scientific survey of a sample of residents about one or two key services (e.g. police, parks and recreation, planning, solid waste collection). Purpose: to delve deeper into understanding NCS findings and to plan action. Results will represent the entire community's perspective providing a more complete understanding about the 'why's' of The NCS findings. Exploration of perspectives will be less in depth than in focus groups.

Employee survey of The NCS™ - scientific administration of The NCS™ to all or a sample of employees with a report that compares results from residents to results from employees. Purpose: to determine the "performance gap" - the difference in ratings given by the service recipients and the service providers.

Employee survey - scientific administration of an employee survey to all or a sample of employees. NRC has created the Local Government Employee Survey™ that compares results on key dimensions of the work environment. Purpose: to identify areas where the organization is working well and where it needs improvement so that employee satisfaction and service delivery are maximized.

Business survey of The NCS™ - scientific administration of a survey of The NCS™ to all or a sample of local businesses with a report that compares results from residents to results from businesses. Purpose: to determine the "business gap" - the difference in ratings given by the business owners/managers and residents.

Business survey - scientific administration of a business survey to all or a sample of local businesses. NRC has created The Main Street Business Monitor™, a survey that covers business expectations about, and satisfaction with, local government service delivery. Purpose: for local government and businesses to cooperate in understanding how best to move the local economy forward.

Special populations survey - scientific administration of a survey directed at a demographic segment of the population. Purpose: to understand the needs of older adults, youth, people of color, low English proficiency, low income residents or others for planning to close the needs gap.

Web surveys for topical questions (Community Listening Posts Project) - scientific recruitment of residents to participate in a panel of community members asked to respond to brief surveys on topical issues every quarter. Purpose: to gather resident perspectives about key community policy questions inexpensively and quickly but with findings that can be generalized to most of the community.

Mystery shopping - observational protocols are used by an independent group to monitor interactions with staff. Track how long it takes to answer a phone; response quality of receptionists; the knowledge level of staff who offer direct customer service; the length of time

it takes to return calls or find answers; interactions with parking control officers or code enforcement officials; observations of municipal courts; building code review or land use plan checking are examples. Purpose: to understand current practices and identify areas for improvement.

Contact NRC with questions about these studies: Heather@n-r-c.com

The National Citizen Survey™

Who We Are

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a cost effective system for conducting comprehensive surveys of local residents and an important benchmarking tool that allows comparison among communities. The NCS™ begins with a customizable survey with core questions important to your community.

National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) is one of the leading survey research and performance measurement teams in the United States, focusing on the information needs of the public sector.

The principles of NRC have authored several articles about citizen survey research methods, as well as a book on the methods of citizen surveying *Citizen Surveys: How to do them, how to use them, what they mean* published by the International City/County Management Association in April, 2000.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is the professional and educational organization representing appointed managers and administrators in local governments throughout the world.

The National Citizen Survey™ is the latest in a long series of initiatives created by NRC to further public trust and confidence in local government and improve the management of local government services.

Thomas I Miller, Ph.D., is the president of NRC. He received a Ph.D. in research and evaluation methods from the University of Colorado. He has worked in state and local government since 1977. With Michelle Kobayashi, he wrote, *Citizen Surveys: How to do them, how to use them, what they mean*, published in 2000 by ICMA, Washington, D.C. Tom founded National Research Center, Inc. in 1994. He has designed, overseen and written results of hundreds of research and evaluation projects and presented his findings to a wide variety of audiences, both academic and lay. He has written about survey research in journals devoted to public management, including *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, *Management Science and Policy Analysis and Governing*. Believing that low-cost, quality surveys are an important part of local government management, Tom has spent years developing The NCS questionnaire and protocols.

Heather Locke, M.A., is The National Citizen Survey™ Director. Heather earned a master's degree in Religious Studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder and undergraduate degrees in Religion and French. Her experience is in research, management, coordination, customer service and teaching. Heather manages all of The NCS surveys; including working closely with interested jurisdictions and those who participate. She oversees the survey process through questionnaire customization, data collection and report writing, as well as post-report consultation on interpretation of results and next steps.

Damema Zoss, B.A., is The National Citizen Survey™ Associate Director. Damema earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Vermont. Her experience and skills include marketing, management and customer service. Damema is involved in all aspects of The NCS from customizing surveys to data analysis and report creation. She also maintains the normative database for NRC.

Erin Caldwell, MSPH, MSPH is a senior research associate at NRC. Erin has earned a master's degree in public health with an emphasis in research methods and statistics. Erin has over 10 years experience as a senior researcher and research manager. She has designed and conducted scores of citizen surveys, needs assessments, policy studies and program evaluations. Erin helped to develop The NCS.

Shannon Hayden, M.A., senior analyst, earned her undergraduate degree in Sociology from The Colorado College and a master's degree in Educational Psychology (emphasis on research and evaluation methodology) from the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. Shannon has been involved in dozens of citizen surveys at NRC, working as a project manager and on all aspects of the projects, including survey instrument development, overseeing data collection and analyzing and reporting the data. She helped develop The NCS and oversaw the Beta Site testing of this project. Her background includes a number of years in marketing. She continues to contribute technical assistance and analysis to The NCS.

Lee Tyson, B.A., analyst, has a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and English from the University of Connecticut. Lee has assisted NRC principals on projects with myriad topics including parks and recreation, older adult needs assessments, transportation, policy studies and code enforcement. Lee has worked extensively with NCS staff in developing reports and normative comparisons.

14 Things you get with The NCS Basic Service...

1. Copy of Citizen Surveys: *How To Do Them, How To Use Them, What They Mean*
2. Customized survey form and mailing envelopes with jurisdiction name, logo, and local contact
3. Choice of services to be evaluated by residents
4. Addition of three optional questions
5. Three mailings to 1,200 randomly selected households: pre-survey postcard and two mailings of the survey instrument
6. A margin of error of approximately +/-5 percentage points
7. Data entry and cleaning
8. Statistical analysis of survey results
9. Written report illustrated with tables and graphs
10. Comparative norms for service evaluations
11. Technical assistance by phone and email
12. Add-on options for further reports and customization
13. Debriefing call
14. Certificate of survey authenticity signed by ICMA Executive Director, Bob O'Neill and the President of NRC, Thomas I Miller, Ph.D.



Calendar of New Classes

March - August 2007



We have "Classes" or groups of participants beginning at the start of each month. In order to be considered for a certain Class, we need to receive your enrollment form and check approximately two weeks prior to the start date. We will consider "late arrivals" contingent on space available in each Class. Feel free to try, we are happy to work with your schedule as much as possible!

March

Start: February 26
Data collection: April 9-May 14
Draft reports: June 4
Completion of The NCS: June 25

April

Start: April 2
Data collection: May 14-June 18
Draft reports: July 9
Completion of The NCS: July 30

May

Start: April 30
Data collection: June 11-July 16
Draft reports: August 6
Completion of The NCS: August 27

June

Start: May 29
Data collection: July 9-August 13
Draft reports: September 4
Completion of The NCS: Sept. 24

July

Start: July 2
Data collection: Aug. 13-Sept. 17
Draft reports: October 8
Completion of The NCS: October 29

August

Start: July 31
Data collection: Sept. 10-Oct. 15
Draft reports: November 5
Completion of The NCS: Nov. 26